

TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 15, 1999

CONTACT:

Greg Mitchell
615-741-2904
Ext. 131

AREA CODE RELIEF NEEDED FOR (615); TRA TO RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENT

NASHVILLE - The North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) has advised the Tennessee Regulatory Authority (TRA) that sometime during the fourth quarter of the year 2000, the (615) area code will exhaust.

In anticipation of such, the TRA will be asking Tennessee consumers in the affected areas for suggestions on addressing the issue.

To be scheduled, the TRA will be hosting a series of regional public meetings throughout the (615) area for the purpose of receiving comments from the public on the proposed area code relief plans.

“The purpose of these meetings will be to hear from the citizenry and to establish a forum in which an exchange of information can occur,” says TRA Consumer Services Chief, Eddie Roberson.

Changing area codes has become commonplace in Tennessee, as it has across much of the nation. In September of 1995, eastern Tennessee became (423), making it the first region in the state to receive a new area code. September of 1997 followed with the dividing of the (615) area into two separate calling zones, (615) and (931). And

(page 2)

“As the market for telecommunications grows, so does the need for accompanying telephone number prefixes,” says Roberson. “Over time, this expansion of services and providers will inevitably cause a depletion of area codes - which is linked to the available number of telephone prefixes.”

“(615) is not running out of numbers, but rather, telephone number prefixes,” he adds.

Another factor contributing to the depletion of numbers is the inefficient use of numbers by the telephone companies that issue them, which sometimes results in large blocks of numbers going unused.

Number conservation has become the subject of intense focus by both federal regulators and the TRA, who view the need to constantly provide area code relief as troublesome in light of the fact that there are available numbers going unused.

Says Roberson, “We are working with the Tennessee Telecommunications Association on how to better utilize the numbering system in Tennessee. Their recommendations may prolong the life expectancy of Tennessee’s other area codes.”

There are two options being proposed by NANPA to address the issue facing the (615) area. The first of which would be a geographic “**Split**” and the second, an “**Overlay**” method.

Under the **Split** option, Davidson County would retain use of (615), and the remaining 12 counties would be assigned a new area code. This plan would require 10-digit dialing for those calling into and out of the two area codes, but 7-digit dialing would be retained for calls made within the respective area codes.

Under the **Overlay** method, a new area code would be superimposed over the geographic area covering (615). This plan would allow all current customers to retain use of the (615) area code and number changes would not be required. However, consistent with FCC regulations, 10-digit dialing within and between (615) and the new area code would be required.

The TRA is urging all interested consumers to attend the public meetings in their respected counties.

